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THE ARMENIAN CHURCH IN ITS RELATION TO THE RUSSIAN GOVERNMENT.

BY SAMUEL GRAHAM WILSON.

A CRISIS has arisen in the history of the Gregorian-Armenian Church. This crisis pertains to the whole Armenian Church, but has special relation to the million and a half Armenians who inhabit Transcaucasia. Etchmiadzin, the primitive seat of Gregory the Illuminator, and the six dioceses into which the Armenian Church is divided, have during the past year been the scene of agitations and protests, of demonstrations, popular and clerical, and of incipient rebellion against the Czar and his administration. The Armenians of Transcaucasia are stirred to their hearts' depths, and moved to action as even the massacres in Turkey did not move them.

What has precipitated this crisis? What has occasioned such a sudden and unexpected ecclesiastical and national ferment? I shall answer these questions, not as an advocate of either side, but letting the facts speak for themselves.

I. The immediate cause of this ferment is an ukase of the Czar regarding the properties of the Gregorian-Armenian Church and its endowment. This edict was issued on June 12th, 1903, in accordance with a decision of the Administrative Council, acting on the advice of Prince Galitzin, the Governor-General of the Transcaucasus. It decrees that the Russian Government shall take immediate possession of all the properties and funds pertaining to the Armenian churches, monasteries, religious institutions, church-schools, and seminaries — namely lands, cultivated or uncultivated, of whatever name or kind, forests, fields, fisheries, mills and shops, and cash funds. These shall be taken from the control of the Armenian clergy and institutions. Endowments and funds at interest shall be delivered to the Minister

of the Interior, while properties shall be given over to the administration of the Minister of Agriculture and Government Properties. The decree applies also to all properties and funds that may in future be donated or bequeathed to the Church or its Institutions. It does not apply to properties in St. Petersburg and Moscow, nor to land actually occupied by churches, monasteries, parsonages, and parish schools, or in use for cemeteries and gardens surrounding them which are not a source of income. It professes to preserve the right of ownership to the Gregorian Church, but declares that the present administration is contrary to the interests of the Government and even of the Armenians themselves. It assures them that the income and interest shall be paid to the Church institutions, priests and parishes, after deducting the cost of administration, taxes and repairs, and five per cent. to be used for a capital for the benefit of the Church. Any questions or doubts about the interpretation of this ukase shall be decided by the Minister of the Interior, and not referred to the courts for decision.

These Church properties consist of such remnants of donations and bequests from the faithful during sixteen centuries of the Church's history as have escaped the hands of the spoilers. Some villages, mills, and water-rights belong to the monasteries, and the villages have in the past paid their rents to the Church. These lands are, however, small in amount and do not in themselves create any question. Of late years, considerable endowments have been given for the schools and seminaries. The amount involved is not more than \$75,000,000. The grief and indignation of the Armenians arise not so much from the loss of the property, though they regard that as virtually confiscated. Their sorrow proceeds from the fact that they see in the decree a forceful measure against the independence of their national Church, whereby their clergy, from the village priest to the Catholicos, with their monasteries and seminaries, are bound to and made dependent on the Russian Administration, and the whole Church prepared to be more easily constrained to enter the fold of Orthodoxy. They see in it a further advance toward crushing out their national life and amalgamating them with the Russian race.

II. Let us briefly indicate the conflicting desires and aims of the Russian Government and the Armenians.

After the Russo-Persian war of 1828, the Armenians of Transcaucasia, with Etchmiadzin, their ecclesiastical centre, and their Catholicos, passed under the rule of Russia. Then Czar Nicholas I. gave a constitution to the Armenian Church, called *Polojenya*. In it Russia assumed the right to direct the internal affairs of the Church. It appointed a Russian procurator to reside at Etchmiadzin, to supervise all proceedings of the Synod, and especially to control the election of the Catholicos. The power of the latter was gradually restricted. Continual friction between the Church and the Government caused increasing irritation and distrust.

The Czar's Government has a definite and decided purpose. It aims to amalgamate the Armenians with the Slavic element, first by extending the Russian language among them, and secondly by bringing them into the Orthodox fold. When schools were authorized among them, it was stipulated that the Russian language should be taught. Undoubtedly, a knowledge of Russian is advantageous to the Armenians, yet after seventy-five years, it is estimated that only three or four per cent. of them read or speak Russian. Bringing the Armenians to accept the Græco-Russian faith was regarded as hopeful, because the Georgians had been so easily converted. There was organized in the Caucasus a "Society for the Propagation of Orthodoxy," which receives funds from the Government, but its conciliatory advances have not met with any marked success. Russian efforts have rather been of a repressive nature. They have striven to strangle Armenian national aspirations and check their national development. Regarding the Church as the head and centre of the race, they have sought to curtail its privileges, abridge its ancient prerogatives, and bring it into submission, with the hope of ultimate organic union.

On the other hand, the Armenians were alert and active, not only to resist these endeavors, but to work out an ideal of a greater future for themselves. The national spirit manifested itself in the founding of schools, libraries, theatres, newspapers, and philanthropic and publication societies. These in turn have helped to develop the national spirit. The watchword of the movement has been, "Our Race." It has developed a patriotism which is intense, fervid, overpowering. It has aimed at the preservation of their language and the development of a new national literature, and at keeping the race free from admixture with Georgians and Russians. Many families who had forgotten

their mother-tongue and who used Turkish, Persian, Kurdish or Georgian have learned to speak and write the modern Armenian. The new spirit says, "Let that woman be considered a traitor who talks any other language than the Armenian to her children." It has created for itself and fans its fires with national songs, embodying the ardent longings of the race and hatred of its enemies. It has voiced itself in romances, newspapers, and in every assembly of the people where the police permit. It has revived the study of national history, dwelling on the days of glory of the ancient kings, setting apart days, such as the birthday of Vartan, to commemorate their deeds and to exhort to emulation of their heroism. It has called the drama to its aid, and presented these heroes moving on the stage before an applauding people. It has sent its youths to Switzerland and Germany, to return imbued with ideas of liberty and progress, ready to instruct the rising generation. It has formed secret societies to cultivate patriotism, and to plan for future action—revolutionary, if need be. It aimed at nothing less than political independence—a reuniting of the Armenian provinces, now under Turkey and Russia, and the establishment of an autonomous Armenia similar to Bulgaria.

When the Armenians were massacred in Turkey, patriotism in the Caucasus reached a white heat. It broke through even its former partial restraint. Then the Russian Government assumed a sterner attitude toward all Armenian agitation. It prevented Armenians from expressing their sympathy with their brethren in Turkey or helping them financially in their distress. Even the reception of the 50,000 refugees was qualified with such conditions that they petitioned to be returned to Turkey. After the massacres, Russia began a series of repressive measures against her own Armenian subjects. These have followed each other in quick succession and with increasing severity.

III. Let us review the measures* whereby the Russian Government is restraining Armenian development.

First, the school question should receive attention. By the decree of 1836, the right to establish schools was granted to the Armenians. These schools were to be under the superintendence of the Bishops and the Synod of Etchmiadzin, whose actions and

* These are described in detail by an anonymous St. Petersburg correspondent of a Geneva Armenian journal in letters which have been published in Armenian, under the title "*Caucasian Verker*," or "*Caucasian Wounds*," to which volume I am indebted.

rules must be submitted to the Minister of the Interior. Under this authorization, a system of schools gradually grew up in Transcaucasia. About 1870, the desire for education greatly increased. Strenuous exertions were made to bring culture and enlightenment to the people. In 1882 an Armenian Educational Convention was held in Tiflis with great enthusiasm. It showed that considerable progress had been made. Five hundred parish schools were in operation with 900 teachers and 30,000 pupils. Most of these were elementary schools, with the addition of several classes of a Secondary or High School grade. These schools were supported partly by Church endowments, partly by tuitions, but largely by the donations and endowments of wealthy Armenians. It became quite a custom for Armenians to bequeath a portion of their property to the schools. Some schools have also a theatre attached, whose income helps to support the school.

In addition to the parish schools, seminaries were founded for the training of priests, "to prepare spiritual pastors for Russia and especially to foreign countries," *i. e.*, Armenians in Turkey and Persia. General Paschievitch and Baron Rosen favored these foundations. One was planned for each of the six dioceses. The Nersesian Seminary was founded at Tiflis in 1824, one at Erivan in 1837, and others at Shusha and Etchmiadzin, but permission was refused for the establishment of one at Baku. The Nersesian Seminary is poorly housed, and repeated applications for a building-permit have been refused. The seminary at Etchmiadzin is the only one that has specially tried to fulfil its theological object. It has substantial buildings and is in the midst of classic surroundings. The ancient churches and monasteries recall the history and exemplify the architecture of the best periods of the race. The old refectory of the monks, with its stone tables, furnishes a striking contrast to the printing establishment with its modern presses. An artificial lake and fine old trees add beauty to the campus, especially when viewed in connection with the high walls and castle-like gates of the inclosures.

Languages, mathematics, literature, philosophy and theology are taught, but physical sciences are prohibited. Much of the instruction is elementary.

Both the parish schools and the seminaries have a strong nationalistic spirit, inculcating a love for Armenia, its history and its Church and political aspirations and hopes clearly incon-

sistent with Russia's plans. It need create no surprise that Russia put her iron heel upon them. The first severe stroke fell in 1884. A decree provided that the Russian language should be the medium of instruction in the schools. Armenian language and religion could be taught as subsidiary studies. No classes above a common-school grade could be continued. The teachers must obtain certificates from the Russian Government by passing an examination through the medium of Russian. The supreme control of all the schools must be under the Minister of Education. Lynch says of this ukase, "It may be branded as an infamous document." But the Russians would reply that they had established schools which were neglected. For instance, at Alexandropol the Russian schools had 140 pupils and the Armenian schools 1200. There were but 159 Armenian pupils in the Russian Gymnasium at Erivan, supported at a cost of \$35,000 annually, while the Armenian seminary had 360 pupils. In the Armenian schools Russian was slighted. The Russians regarded the teaching in the Armenian schools as "separatist," not to say treasonable.

The Synod of Etchmiadzin refused its consent to this decree, pleading that the question should be postponed until a New Catholicos was chosen. The Government took summary action. The police dismissed the pupils and closed the buildings. When Margar was chosen Catholicos,—a creature of the Russian Administration,—the favor of a respite was granted him. The strict enforcement of the ukase was put off for six years. Until that time, the requirement of a good knowledge of Russian on the part of the teachers was suspended. But the higher grades remained closed, and the schools continued under police supervision. The result was a great diminution in the number of schools and in the attendance, so that in 1889 there remained 123 schools, with 482 teachers and 11,000 pupils. Subsequently, others were reopened.

Before the expiration of the term of grace, Catholicos Margar died and Kremian Haireg succeeded in 1893. Then Prince Galitzin and Yanuski, the Director of Schools, showed no mercy. Three hundred and twenty schools were again closed, only thirty remaining open. The Russian Government said it was convinced that the schools were "nests of nationalistic propaganda." The Armenians raised a bitter wail, appealing to the public opinion of Europe, especially of England. But this only resulted in

greater restrictions. It was determined to enforce the decree strictly. The parish schools should only be allowed under Government management. Russian must be the language of the school; teachers must have the Russian certificate; graduates of the seminaries could not be teachers in the parish schools. They were also deprived of the privilege of other high school graduates of serving for two years in the army, instead of five.

In order to obtain complete control of the schools, and at the same time relieve the Government of as much as possible of expense connected with them, a decree was issued taking over all the school properties and endowments. This was accomplished without serious opposition. But in their zeal, the Government officers seized much property that pertained to the Church exclusively. The clergy brought suit to recover these properties. These suits continued in court for some time. Meanwhile, most of the parish schools failed to comply with the conditions and were permanently closed. Those which were opened were so changed in character as to be no longer Armenian schools.

Secondly, let us notice the suspension of the various societies. In 1894, there were in Baku "The Armenian Philanthropic Society," founded in 1863, and in Tiflis "The Armenian Publication Society," "The Armenian Women's Benevolent Society," and "The Armenian Benevolent Society of the Caucasus," the last named having eighteen branches in such cities as Erivan, Batum, Alexandropol, Shusha, Nakhejevan, etc. All of these had been founded by Government permission. Their object was to aid the poor, to open schools and libraries, to furnish scholarships and publish books for the Armenians.

In 1898, Prince Galitzin made an adverse report on these societies to the Czar, in which he said: "The philanthropic societies give more attention to politics than to philanthropy. They have branches in almost all the cities of the Caucasus. Pupils who are aided are most frequently sent to foreign countries for education—a proceeding contrary to the ruling principles of the Russian Government. . . . These societies are not worthy of confidence and I propose to the Czar that they be closed." The order was given (1889) for their closing, excepting the Publication Society. Afterwards permission was given to open two philanthropic societies in Tiflis and one in Baku, but the branches remained closed. These newly authorized societies were forbidden

to open schools or libraries, or to assist pupils or authors. They could continue to feed the poor.

Not only were the societies prohibited from establishing libraries, but for an individual or committee to establish one under Armenian control is beset with so many difficulties, restrictions and inspections, and requires so many petitions, that many considerable places in the Caucasus remain without circulating libraries. Permission was refused for libraries in Eriwan and Alexandropol and in many other places. Public libraries were closed in Shusha, Nakhejevan, Okhalskha and other cities.

In former days permission was given for the publication of Armenian newspapers. As early as 1896, the question was raised as to the necessity of Armenian or Georgian newspapers. It was decided that it would be better if they were all in the Russian language, and that no new Armenian papers should be established. There remained two dailies and four monthlies. Of the latter, one, "The Ararat," is theological, one is a fashion paper and one is for children. During this year the two dailies and "The Ararat" are under suspension.

Finally, in 1900, the Publication Society was closed. Its founding had been approved by Grand-Duke Michael. In twenty-one years it had published only 187 books, many of them small; all of them had passed inspection by the censor, and many of them were translations of works already in Russian. But further development of the Armenian language is not approved; therefore, this society must close. Other books, too, like the novels of the celebrated Raffee, were turned down by the censor when permission for a new edition was desired. School books in Ararat-Armenian are being printed to a very limited extent, as there is little further demand for them. It is forbidden to take the oath in the Armenian language in the Courts. Will Russia be able to kill their language which has revived and shown such fine development within the last half-century?

While these measures were being formulated and carried out, the Courts were hearing the appeals of the Armenian clergy against the seizing of the Church properties under the order for taking over the school properties. In May, 1902, a decision was rendered sustaining the appeals, and ordering the properties and endowments to be returned to the Church. This was cause of rejoicing among the Armenians.

Their rejoicing was of short duration, for even then a decree was preparing, which would overwhelm them. Prince Galitzin had been advocating for some time the seizing of the Armenian Church properties. A Ministerial document has been published which narrates that, "in 1898, Prince Galitzin raised the question of taking possession of the properties and capital of the Church. This was opposed by the Ministers of Finance and Agriculture as likely to lead to disturbances, but Prince Galitzin was delegated to find a way to curb the special political activities of the Armenian clergy." Prince Galitzin in 1902 renewed his previous recommendation. He was seconded by Pobiedonostseff, the Procurator of the Holy Synod. The Czar's cabinet is said to have disapproved the scheme again, but the Czar was not willing to refuse Prince Galitzin and gave his consent. Hence was issued the ukase of June 12th, (O. S.), 1903, whereby the Government decreed to take over the control of the properties and endowments of the Armenian Church, as has been described.

This ukase had a deep and rousing effect on the Armenian people. The National Church is the darling of the Armenian heart, not simply,—perhaps not chiefly—for the sake of religion, but as the centre of the race, the sole relic of former national greatness; and the people, whether believers or sceptics, secularists or libertines, cling to it with ardent love. The apple of their eye was touched with a hot iron, and they cried out with a great and bitter cry. The common people were moved from inaction as no question of schools or societies could move them. Men of age and culture, too, spoke of it with trembling voices and tears—men who never take the communion from a priest, but who feel that the Holy of Holies of the nation's life is being violated. A universal protest arose from all sides. Cities and villages began to pour in delegations to Etchmiadzin to demand of the Catholicos and Synod that they refuse their consent to the decree. From far and near the voice of opposition was heard. The Patriarch of Constantinople telegraphed his protest in the name of the three millions of Armenians living in Turkey. The Bishops of Persia added their emphatic "No." In far-off America, Bishop Sarajian headed a delegation from New England to Washington to make their appeal to the Russian Ambassador and to the President. In the name of the Lord and Saviour to whom the churches had been dedicated; in the name of their martyr-ancestors who had left

them this inheritance sealed in blood, and who had endowed the churches and monasteries; in the name of living donors, who reside outside of the Russian Empire, but look to Etchmiadzin as their sanctuary; in the name of Czar Nicholas I., whose decree* had established the right of the Gregorian Church to ownership of its property and of the Synod to control of the same; by the right of possession and administration through more than a millennium, — a possession which even Mongol and Seljuk, Persian and Turk had not refused to respect; by natural right and by civil right, they protested against the seizure as a usurpation.

True, the official bulletin has declared that the Government intends to take better care of the churches and priests and to secure them a more certain and larger income, that the rights of the Church over its special possessions will be preserved, that after the churches and schools are cared for, the remainder will constitute a capital fund for the benefit of the Church to secure its regular and future development, and that the parishes will be aided and the properties secured from embezzlement. But the Armenians believe these to be idle words, diplomatic phrases. They feel quite capable of administering and preserving their own estates. They wish to control their own churches. Petitions begging for the Czar's mercy and a revocation of the edict poured into St. Petersburg from Catholicos and Patriarch, from Bishops in Russia and abroad, from communities far and near. During the interval granted by the Government for the Church authorities to signify their consent, the Catholicos retired to Sivan Monastery. On July 28th, he was returning by Alexandropol, and spent the night at the Bishop's house. In the morning the bells were tolled. All the Armenians closed their shops and assembled around his lodging. First a band of girls, next of young men, presented petitions to the Catholicos. He ejaculated, "Pray about it," "Be patient." They replied that the time for prayer was past, the time for action had come. Later, the Catholicos entered a carriage to go to the railway depot. Suddenly a mob of 10,000 men, women and children, weeping, surrounded him, and demanded a definite promise from him to refuse consent to the Czar's edict. The Mayor of the city came and seated himself in the carriage, as if to protect the Catholicos. The crowd threw the Mayor out into the street and bore the carriage, with

* Polojenya of 1836, Articles 8, 67, 90, 117, 121,

the Catholicos, on their shoulders, to the station, mingling their cheers with curses. At the station, some broke the windows of the cars, others dishonored the Bishops by pulling their beards.

On Sunday, August 3rd (O. S.), after the Bishop of Erivan had finished mass, a crowd of some thousands seized him, forced him into a carriage and directed their course toward Etchmiadzin, fourteen miles distant. *En route*, they encountered and beat the Chief of Police. The Governor escaped from their hands by flight. A company of 250 Cossacks met them but did not offer effective resistance. At Etchmiadzin, Cossacks guarded the Palace Gate. The people entered through the Seminary Gate, which the students opened for them. Their mission was successful, and they received from the Catholicos a solemn promise that he would not yield to the Czar's demands. Encouraged by his people, he gave a decretal to this effect to the Synod, which, contrary to the protests of the Russian Procurator, Gencheli, took the same determined stand. When officers came to take over the properties they refused them admittance. On August 6th a telegram came from Minister Plehve urging immediate obedience and saying, "Every day of disobedience to the will of the King will bring heavy consequences." The Catholicos replied, pleading that the Emperor grant delay and an opportunity to explain. The Minister telegraphed, "The Emperor refuses your request for delay," and warned him of the consequences. On August 24th, came the festival of the blessing of the Meron—the holy oil which is made of flowers and is supposed to boil of itself. The blessing of it is usually the occasion of a great concourse of people. The ceremony was placed at an early hour to avoid disturbance, but 3,000 people quickly assembled. Some 400 women with shouts and songs presented themselves before the Catholicos, protesting that the Church property should not be surrendered. The Catholicos and the women wept together, and he assured them that he would never voluntarily surrender the properties.

On September 5th, the official delegation, consisting of the Vice-Governor, the Procurator and others, came and demanded the delivery of the properties. The Catholicos refused, saying somewhat as follows: "I have sworn to the Czar of Russia to be faithful to him, and I am ready at any moment to fulfil his commands. If necessary, I am ready to take the cross in my hand and lead my people against the Czar's enemies, to prove with our

blood that we are his humble subjects. But, at the same time, I gave oath to my own race—the four million Armenians,—to be faithful to it, and to uphold its ancient rights. The Armenian race with a million signatures has appealed to me to mediate and procure the Czar's mercy. I have appealed and await his favor." The delegation insisted that they must carry out the Czar's command, and that the Catholicos should sign the transfer. He replied: "I have a life, take that if you will. The rest is my people's. I can give away nothing of it. I cannot sign the papers." They demanded the keys of the treasury and, being refused, they sealed it. During this interview, the whole town was in mourning. Stores, shops and even the houses were closed. Not an Armenian appeared in the streets. A regiment of soldiers, 200 Cossacks and a battery of 80 guns, with many policemen were in readiness. Soldiers surrounded the monastery.

Some days afterward, the Governor of Erivan arrived with soldiers and police, with carpenters and blacksmiths. They broke open the iron doors of the treasury. Safes and boxes were rifled, 850,000 rubles and even a collection of ancient coins were carried off. All the monks remained in their rooms. A list was made of the properties and endowments, and they were formally declared to be transferred to the control of the Government.

In other places the transfer was also carried out by force. In Elizabetpol, on August 29th (O. S.), the whole Armenian population, to the number of 10,000, gathered at the upper church and marched to the lower one, where the Vartabed, Beneg, lived, to urge him to refuse consent. *En route*, the police met them and urged them to disperse. They answered with stones and went on. As the Vartabed did not at first appear, they shouted and threw stones at his windows. Finally, he appeared and said that nothing would be delivered up willingly. The Vice-Governor now brought up the soldiers and thrice commanded the crowd to disperse. A youth came out of the crowd and insulted him, saying, "We don't want to change our religion as you have done." The Vice-Governor is a Jewish convert to Orthodoxy. He instantly shot the young man dead, and commanded the troops to fire. Thirty Armenians were killed and fifty wounded besides some Russians. In Tiflis the streets were full of soldiers. Several Armenians were killed. The properties of the churches and of the Nersesian school were listed in the absence of the Principal and trustees. In

Baku, word spread that the Government would take the churches on September 2nd. Early in the morning, a crowd came from Balakhana, a neighboring oil town. Many of them were armed. They filled the churches and streets. Police and Cossacks demanded their dispersion. They replied to the fire of the soldiery with stones and revolvers. The people from within the church and the soldiers without continued to exchange shots for some hours. Some Russians and eleven Armenians were killed and forty-five wounded. By midnight their ammunition was exhausted. Many fled and one hundred were imprisoned. For some days, the soldiers encamped around the church. For some time Armenians in Baku dressed in mourning.

In Mudara, near Soukim, the doors of the church were broken down with axes and the property listed. In the country districts, almost without exception, there were refusals and popular demonstrations. In many places, masses for the dead were said. Orators, sometimes women, harangued the crowds. The police made many arrests.

After the Government had taken formal possession of the properties and funds of the Church and the Armenians had made this series of vigorous but ineffectual protests and demonstrations, there followed a period of comparative quiet. The Government maintains an unbending attitude, and continues to make many arrests. The prisons are full, and additional houses are being turned into prisons. Some ecclesiastics were punished with banishment, including at least one Bishop, and also two priests of Etchmiadzin.

The Armenians have taken up the weapon of assassination, or rather a class of terrorists, who are among them, have adopted this weapon. It is used in the first place against so-called traitors. In Etchmiadzin, an Armenian who signed consent to the Government edict was killed in the street. In Gorkh, Priest Khachadur, who opposed the protest and tore up the paper of the protesters, was found dead in his bed. In Tiflis, an attempt was made to kill Priest Alexan, who sided with the Russians. In Kars, a Greek priest, Vasiloff,—who converted several Armenian villages to the Russian Church—tauntingly exclaimed: "May I live to present the sacrifice of the Mass, according to the Greek rite, in the Armenian Church of the Holy Mother of God." He was shot dead in the street.

But most serious of all was the attempt made on Prince Galitzin. As he was driving through the streets of Tiflis, he was attacked by three Armenians, who made desperate efforts to murder him. His assailants were killed on the spot, but the Governor-General escaped with slight wounds. He is regarded with deadly hatred by the Armenians, as the author of this series of measures to oppress them. The Armenians have robbed several Russian churches in Tiflis, and one of them who made no effort to escape answered at his trial: "I only did at night what some officers are doing by daylight." As a means of securing the apparent consent of the people to the transfer of the properties, every member of a guild, shopkeeper or merchant who renewed his license at the New Year was presented with the alternative of signing his consent or having his business closed. To restrict agitation an order was given in June, 1904, that no Armenians from Persia or Turkey should be allowed to enter the Caucasus. Their passports were refused visé.

The Government is said to be preparing a new Polojenya or Constitution for the Armenian Church. It has not yet been published. Rumor says that the office of Catholicos will be abolished, that in lieu of one, the Czar will appoint a Metropolitan who shall reside in St. Petersburg, to which place the Synod of the Armenian Church shall be transferred, and the ancient seat of St. Gregory will remain a common monastery; that the Meron or sacred oil will hereafter be made on the banks of the Neva, not at Etchmiadzin; that the Armenian Church will be brought into a condition of complete subordination, that no ordination of deacon, priest or bishop will be allowed except by authorization of the Czar, which will be withheld until the Church makes submission.

The Catholicos and the institutions at Etchmiadzin have begun to be pressed for funds since the revenues have been cut off and the endowments seized. Hence the Czar has sent a donation of 70,000 rubles to the Catholicos. The latter, fearing Greeks even when bearing gifts, has declined to receive it, and replied that his own people are able and willing to support him.

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